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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 001026

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TAGS: PREL PGOV AG IR

SUBJECT: ALGERIA NON-COMMITTAL ON U.S. STATEMENT ON IRAN

REF: STATE 87682

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman: Reasons 1.5 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Given the absence abroad of Minister Bedjaoui, Ambassador delivered reftel demarche on Iran to MFA Americas Director General Selmane May 31, underscoring the major policy importance of the Secretary's announcement and our strong hope that Algeria would publicly support our initiative and encourage Iran to do the right thing. Ambassador said Algeria and others had long urged that we engage Iran in a dialogue. In an important shift, we were now offering such engagement and dialogue on outstanding issues once Iran suspended its nuclear enrichment and reprocessing activities. At Selmane's request, Ambassador promised to fax a copy of the Secretary's speech (which he subsequently did). Pressed for comment, Selmane said she would immediately pass the Secretary's announcement and the ambassador's demarche to the senior leadership. Pressed for a more substantive response, in view of Algeria's longstanding encouragement of this kind of dialogue, the ever-cautious Selmane said Algeria always "enthusiastically" supported dialogue as a means of solving problems.

¶2. (C) Ambassador also raised our Iran initiative with President Bouteflika June 1, on the margins of his 15-minute walk through the U.S. Pavilion at the Algiers International Trade Fair. Ambassador noted the Secretary's public statement outlining our policy initiative; emphasized our desire for a diplomatic solution and our willingness to join the EU-3 negotiations and engage in dialogue on other issues; and urged public and private support for our initiative. Bouteflika, who did not seem well-informed about our initiative, said that he had not seen the Secretary's policy statement and would need to study her statement before commenting on it. As Bouteflika was departing, Ambassador emphasized that he was raising this issue at the express request of the Secretary.

ERDMAN